

Title: Community Engagement Policy

Adopted: June 15, 2026

Effective: June 16, 2026

Amended/Reviewed: N/A

1.0 RATIONALE

The Durham District School Board recognizes that meaningful community engagement supports strong public education, transparent governance, and informed decision-making that reflects the needs and perspectives of the communities it serves. When undertaken in good faith, with clarity and purpose, engagement strengthens relationships, builds trust, and contributes to more effective decisions.

This policy establishes a shared framework for community engagement across the District, supporting consistent practices that strengthen transparency, accountability, and public confidence.

As a publicly funded institution serving diverse communities, the Board is committed to engagement practices that are inclusive, accessible, intentional, and grounded in respect for human rights and Indigenous rights. Engagement should reflect the diverse perspectives and lived experiences of the communities the District serves.

2.0 OBJECTIVE

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Establish clear governance direction for community engagement across the Durham District School Board;
- Establish a common continuum for engagement practices across the District; and
- Support engagement that is transparent, inclusive, accessible, and proportionate to the matter under consideration.

3.0 DEFINITIONS**3.1 Community Engagement:**

Community engagement is a purposeful process undertaken by the Durham District School Board to inform, consult, involve, or collaborate with students, families/caregivers, and staff in relation to decisions, initiatives, or matters under consideration.

Where appropriate, engagement may also include individuals or groups who are directly impacted by, or who have a reasonable connection to, a decision, initiative or direction.

3.2 Community of Interest:

A Community of Interest refers to individuals, groups, or communities who are directly impacted by, or have a reasonable connection to, a decision or initiative of the Board within its mandate.

This primarily includes students, families/caregivers, and staff, and may also include Indigenous rights holders, partners, and, where appropriate, members of the broader public, depending on the nature of the matter.

Engagement with Indigenous rights holders is distinct and may require approaches that differ from general community engagement, in recognition of Indigenous rights and the Board's commitment to reconciliation.

3.3 Continuum of Engagement:

The continuum of engagement describes the range of approaches the Board may use to support community participation, including inform, consult, involve, and collaborate. These approaches exist along a continuum rather than as a hierarchy and may be used individually or in combination, depending on the purpose and nature of the matter under consideration.

Inform – Provide clear, accessible, and timely information to support understanding of an issue, initiative, decision, or outcome. This may include sharing background information, updates, timelines, or decisions through methods such as website content, newsletters, reports, presentations, or public notices.

Consult – Seek feedback on a defined issue, proposal, or option before a decision is made. This may include structured opportunities for input such as surveys, feedback forms, public submissions, meetings, or engagement sessions.

Involve – Engage participants in exploring issues, options, or approaches so that community perspectives are more directly considered in the matter under consideration. This may include workshops, focus groups, facilitated discussions, or other interactive engagement activities.

Collaborate – Work with participants in aspects of exploring options or developing approaches where shared dialogue, relationship-building, and ongoing engagement are appropriate. This may include advisory discussions, working groups, co-development activities, or other collaborative processes.

The examples above are illustrative and are intended to support understanding of the continuum of engagement. Engagement approaches and methods may vary depending on the purpose, scope, communities of interest, available resources, legal or operational considerations, and the extent to which input can meaningfully inform the matter under consideration.

Additional guidance is provided in Appendix A and related procedures.

3.4 Feedback Loop

The feedback loop is the process of communicating back to participants about what the engagement revealed, how input was considered, and, where applicable, how it informed decisions, outcomes, next steps, or changes to the matter under consideration, in a manner appropriate to the engagement undertaken.

4.0 APPLICATION AND SCOPE

This policy applies to community engagement activities undertaken across the Durham District School Board in relation to matters within the Board's mandate. Engagement approaches may vary depending on the nature, scope, and potential impact of the matter under consideration, and where community input can meaningfully inform the outcome.

Community engagement under this policy may occur at the system level or school level and shall be guided by related procedures.

This policy does not replace or modify legislated consultation requirements, statutory advisory structures, collective agreement obligations, employment-related processes, or individual complaint or concern processes.

5.0 POLICY STATEMENT

The Durham District School Board shall undertake community engagement in a manner that is purposeful, transparent, and proportionate to the matter under consideration.

Engagement processes shall clearly communicate their purpose, scope, and how input will be considered in relation to decision-making.

Community engagement is intended to inform decision-making and strengthen relationships; however, it does not delegate or transfer decision-making authority, which remains with the Board or its delegated authority, as applicable.

6.0 POLICY DIRECTIVES

In conducting community engagement, the Durham District School Board shall:

- 6.1** Conduct engagement in a manner that is transparent, inclusive, and accessible, and that reflects respect for Indigenous rights, human rights, and the diverse perspectives and lived experiences of the communities it serves.
- 6.2** Use the continuum of engagement to guide the selection and design of engagement approaches appropriate to the matter under consideration.
- 6.3** Clearly communicate the purpose of engagement, including what input is being sought and how it will be considered.
- 6.4** Consider and communicate engagement input in a manner appropriate to the engagement undertaken.
- 6.5** Establish and maintain procedures to support the consistent implementation of this policy.

7.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 Board of Trustees

- Approves and reviews this policy in accordance with the established policy review cycle; and
- Considers community input in its decision-making in alignment with the

continuum of engagement.

7.2 DDSB Chief Executive Officer

- Oversees the development and maintenance of procedures necessary for the effective implementation of this policy;
- Promotes system-wide alignment with the standards and expectations set out in this policy; and
- Ensures that engagement practices across the District align with the continuum of engagement.

7.3 Senior Administration

- Leads and conducts community engagement activities within their areas of responsibility in accordance with this policy and related procedures;
- Upholds the principles of transparency, proportionality, and responsible stewardship of community input when undertaking engagement; and
- Ensures that engagement practices, including those at the school level, align with the standards set out in this policy and related procedures.

8.0 EVALUATION

This policy shall be reviewed in accordance with the established policy review cycle to ensure continued relevance, effectiveness, and alignment with legislative requirements and Board priorities.

9.0 COMMUNICATION

This policy shall be published in an accessible format on the Durham District School Board website and communicated to staff and school leaders to support consistent understanding and application across the District.

10.0 APPENDICES

Appendix A – Continuum of Community Engagement

11.0 REFERENCES

- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action
- DDSB Indigenous Education Policy
- DDSB Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy
- PPM 170 - School Board Communication with Parents
- DDSB Public Concerns Policy
- DDSB Public Concerns Procedure
- DDSB By-Laws and Board Member (Trustee) Code of Conduct
- DDSB School Community Council and Parent Involvement Committee Policy
- DDSB School Community Councils Procedure